

Regional Conservation Partnership Program

FY 2018 Announcement for Program Funding Guide



REGIONAL CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM (RCPP)

Fiscal Year (FY) 2018 Announcement for Program Funding (APF) GUIDE



Natural Resources Conservation Service
Commodity Credit Corporation
Financial Assistance Programs Division
Programs Deputy Area

USDA prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, and where applicable, sex (including gender identity and expression), marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, political beliefs, genetic information, reprisal, or because all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.)

Dear RCPP applicant,

Thank you for your interest in the FY 2018 Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP). This guide is a supplement to the FY2018 Announcement for Program Funding (APF). It does not replace the FY2018 RCPP APF; it seeks to provide greater clarification on the application process, requirements, expectations, and terms. Aside from the **deadlines** and **program funding amounts**, there are no significant changes in the FY2018 RCPP APF from FY2017. However, there are a number of points that require clarification for prospective applicants. Please use the FY2018 RCPP APF as the official document, and use this guide for additional information. The sections in this guide follow the sections in the FY2018 APF.

RCPP was established to promote coordination with the agency's partners and use NRCS programs to further conservation, restoration, and sustainable use of soil, water, wildlife, and related natural resources on eligible land on a regional or watershed scale. Successful RCPP projects will provide **measurable impacts and outcomes** tied to the resource concerns they seek to address. Partners are encouraged to cooperate with NRCS and producers in meeting or avoiding the need for national, state, and local natural resource regulatory requirements related to production on eligible land and to implement projects that will result in the installation and maintenance of eligible activities that affect multiple agricultural or non-industrial private forest operations on local, regional, State, or multi-state basis. Through the RCPP, NRCS seeks to co-invest with partners in innovative, cost-effective conservation to benefit farming, ranching, and forest operations, local economies, and the communities and resources in a watershed or other geographic area.

RCPP is not a grant program. RCPP provides an opportunity for partners to scope a five year project in partnership with NRCS to enhance and accelerate conservation efforts, innovation and locally-driven solutions. Partners will develop project applications, as described in the APF, to address specific natural resource objectives in a proposed area or region. Partnering organizations design, promote, implement, and evaluate the project outcomes in partnership with NRCS programs. NRCS Program funds will be reserved along with partner resources towards a designated geographic focus area. NRCS and partners implement RCPP projects by working with agricultural producers and owners of agricultural and forest land. These eligible participants may then apply for voluntary conservation measures through applicable NRCS programs.

INTRODUCTION

Dates: The FY2018 deadlines have changed from FY2017, reflecting the need and desire for an earlier project selection and agreement process.

ADDRESSES

This section outlines the three methods of application submission. The preferred submission method is via email.

Applicants may submit pre- and full proposal applications via Grants.gov. Please note that the Grants.gov electronic submission system is relatively complex and involves several preliminary registration steps before an applicant can be submitted. To register, go to www.grants.gov, click on “Applicants”, and then click on “Get Registered.”

If you have completed a prior application, you may already have completed the registration process. Please allow sufficient time to submit the application electronically in Grants.gov and for possible computer delays. Submitting an RCPP application through Grants.gov requires completing a variety of standard forms including requiring applicants to include a DUNS number and current registration in SAM in order to submit either a pre-proposal or a full proposal.

Note: At the time of the FY2018 APF release, there are efforts in the development of an RCPP Portal. **The RCPP Portal is expected to provide a central location for program information, required forms, and RCPP application submission.** If the Portal is finalized prior to the application deadlines, information will be posted about the Portal on the [RCPP website](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/farmbill/rcpp/) (<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/farmbill/rcpp/>). Additionally, if the Portal becomes available for applications to be submitted through it, the RCPP Team will post the necessary information and details on the [RCPP website](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/farmbill/rcpp/). Guidance and training will follow, as applicants would be encouraged to submit applications via the **RCPP Portal**.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION

I. FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

Legislative Authority

Delivering Assistance through Covered Programs

The “lead partner” should plan to work closely with NRCS throughout the application and implementation process, via the appropriate NRCS office and designated agency point of contact(s) 1.) To determine if proposed projects align with the RCPP mission and policies, 2.) To develop a detailed partnership proposal and, if selected 3.) Throughout the agreement process and project implementation.

Adjustments and Waivers

Adjustment of Terms (AOT): RCPP allows some flexibility to adjust the terms of ACEP, CSP, EQIP, and HFRP in order to achieve the purposes of the program.

Adjusted Gross Income (AGI): The RCPP authority allows for waiver of the AGI limitations for participating producers if the Chief determines that the waiver is necessary to fulfill the objectives of the program and protect environmentally sensitive land of special significance.

Overview of the RCPP Application and Selection Process

If an applicant has applied previously for RCPP and has been awarded an agreement, the applicant may apply again. There will be additional questions that will need to be answered in the application Narrative describing how the previously funded project is being implemented, how this project is different from the previously funded application, etc. If an applicant has previously applied and was not awarded an agreement, please make sure to review all the materials for the current APF to adequately address any changes or clarifications that have been made.

II. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

Partner Eligibility

Applying partners must meet program eligibility requirements.

Individual producers and landowners must meet covered program eligibility requirements.

III. FUNDING AVAILABILITY

Funds will be committed for the duration of the project, not to exceed 5 years from the (date of execution/end of the fiscal year of the date of execution), with the possibility of a single 12-month extension, at the discretion of NRCS.

IV. PRE-PROPOSAL APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS FOR PARTNERSHIP PROJECTS

Format and Instructions

All RCPP applications become the property of NRCS for use in the administration of the program and will not be returned to the applicant.

The pre-proposal lays out the resource concern(s) to be addressed, the location and scale of the project, the key partners and their roles, the timeframe and researched estimate of project financials including types and amounts of funding requested from NRCS and expected contributions from partners. Proposals should demonstrate an understanding of the requested programs and how project partners will measure/evaluate project impacts tied to natural resource concerns.

Refer to the FY2018 APF for complete application instructions.

Content

Data (pre-proposal sections only): A listing of the data elements required by the tool is found in Appendix E.

A. Basic Project Information, Project Details, Executive Summary, Project Partners. Applicants are requested

to list a primary and secondary email contact to help ensure successful receipt of correspondence from the RCPP Team. However, initial correspondence will be directed only to the primary contact listed, so that address should be established accordingly. As such, it is important to provide an active, accurate email address and check email settings to ensure that “safeguards” on the primary email account are not likely to prevent receipt of automated email messages.

- B. Project Financials. Applications must reflect the total estimated cost of the project, showing separately the Federal share requested. NOTE: Pre-proposal budget figures are considered preliminary, and it is understood that there may be changes to the budget in the full proposal process. (In fact, such changes are commonly necessitated by limited RCPP fund availability.)

*Definitions of *Financial* and *Technical Assistance* are found in Appendix A.

Maps: A one-page JPEG map showing the location of the project within the state or CCA is sufficient and preferred unless the project area is complex. Format: JPEG, 400-500 DPI resolution. Illustrate pertinent project boundaries, such as hydrologic unit code boundaries, species ranges, and areas targeted for conservation. Outline on the map or describe in the application the areas that need conservation treatment, and identify the number of acres involved.

V. FULL PROPOSAL APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS FOR PARTNERSHIP PROJECTS

All selected pre-proposals must be updated to meet more extensive full proposal submission requirements. Refer to the FY2018 APF for complete application instructions.

Detailed Application Requirements

Geographic Information System Shapefile: Each proposal submission must include a geospatial data layer (shapefile) that delineates a polygon encompassing the project area. Only one shapefile should be provided.

- Projection for the data layer should be GCS_North_American_1983; Datum: NAD 83.
- Shapefile data layers are comprised of multiple files with different file extensions, including .shp, .shx, .dbf, .prj, .xml, .sbn and .sbx. In order to flow through the submission process, the files must be included in a single **WinZip file, ultimately to be** uploaded to the RCPP Portal.
- The RCPP project ID# should be contained in the shapefile name

PDF Fillable Form for Descriptive Narratives: All narratives will be restricted to certain character lengths to ensure uniformity of applications. Character limitations include spaces.

Letters of Financial Contribution: Provide letters from all partners providing contributions, including cash and a quantified dollar amount of in-kind services.

Letters of Contribution and the Letter of Intent from the NRCS Lead State Conservationist will be combined into a **single PDF** and uploaded into the Data Tool. “Letters of Support” will not be considered during the review process, and applicants are not encouraged to submit Letters of Support.

Letter of Intent from the NRCS Lead State Conservationist: Letters of Contribution and the Letter of Intent from the NRCS Lead State Conservationist will be combined into a single PDF and uploaded into the Data Tool. File size should be limited to 10 MB to minimize submission related issues.

The Lead Partner must consult all applicable NRCS State Conservationists; however, only one letter is required to demonstrate that the proposal meets the intent of RCPP. The State Conservationist providing the letter will document collaboration (or lack thereof) with the other States.

All potential applicants are encouraged to contact the appropriate NRCS State Conservationist with proposal-related questions. For technical, application questions, send an email to RCPP@wdc.usda.gov. Include your 4-digit RCPP ID# in the subject line.

VI. APPLICATION SUBMISSION AND REVIEW

Definition of Success and Reviewing Criteria

The reviewing criteria are key components of successful proposals. The Pre- and Full proposal Narrative questions are based on the four pillars, which are:

1. Solutions. Partners with experience, expertise, and capacity to implement projects that generate results that are **measurable** from economic, environmental, and social perspectives. Partners are responsible conducting an assessment of the project's effects.
2. Contributions. Partners are responsible for contributing to the cost of the project. Federal resources should be leveraged to at least double the total investment in conservation for RCPP projects. Applicants are encouraged to identify the economic impact of the project relative to the NRCS dollar funds requested.
3. Innovation. Promoting innovative projects that integrate multiple conservation approaches to deliver quantifiable economic impacts and measurable solutions to the natural resource concerns. Proposals should clearly and thoroughly layout how partners will **evaluate impacts** and how the project intends to yield **measurable results** tied to the outcome.
4. Participation. Demand for the project should be sufficient to implement the project. The partner is responsible for identifying demand to participate and conducting outreach and education to eligible producers, including historically underserved, such that participation in the project leads to successful outcomes.

VII. AWARD INFORMATION AND ADMINISTRATION

Reporting Requirements

On an annual basis, Lead Partners will be required to provide updates a number of items, which are outlined in Appendix F of the APF.

Requirements for the final report will be established in the Partnership Agreement and will include a description of the goals and outcomes accomplished.

Withdrawal of Applications

Lead Partner applications may be withdrawn by written notice to the Director, Financial Assistance Programs Division with a carbon copy to the RCPP inbox. Notification should include the reason for withdrawal.

VIII. AGENCY CONTACTS

In addition to the Director of Financial Assistance Programs Division, the RCPP Team can be reached via email: RCPP@wdc.usda.gov

Email the RCPP Team with questions about the application document and tools (e.g., Data Entry Tool, required letters).

For project and program-related questions, contact your NRCS State Office and Points of Contact (POCs).

APPENDIX A.--DEFINITIONS

Refer to the AFP, Appendix A, for the main set of RCPP Definitions. Below, you will find additional terms and additional information about terms frequently used in RCPP.

Administrative Costs: Expenses that are operational in nature and part of doing business. This includes “indirect costs/overhead”, rent and utilities, space used by staff, copies, phones, information technology support, etc., that are used by all staff and not directly related to the project. These are not reimbursable TA-eligible expenses, though they may be counted as Partner contributions.

Covered Programs: The Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP), EQIP, CSP, Healthy Forests Reserve Program (HFRP), and in CCAs only, the Watershed Authorities.

DUNS Number: A Dun and Bradstreet DUNS number is a unique nine-digit sequence recognized as the universal standard for identifying and keeping track of over 70 million businesses worldwide. Applicants must obtain a DUNS number. Information on how to obtain a DUNS number can be found at: <http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform> or by calling 1-866-705-5711. Please note that the registration may take up to 14 business days to complete.

Indirect Costs: Indirect costs, as defined by 2 CFR Part 200, mean those costs incurred for a common or joint purpose benefitting more than one cost objective, and not readily assignable to the cost objectives specifically benefitted, without effort disproportionate to the results achieved. Refer to “Technical Assistance.”

Lead State Conservationist: The NRCS State Conservationist who is the primary NRCS contact for multistate RCPP projects. The lead partner works with a NRCS State Conservationist whose state is included in the project area to designate the lead State Conservationist during the pre-proposal phase. The lead State Conservationist provides the Letter of Intent.

SAM: System for Award Management. SAM is the official U.S. Government system that consolidated the capabilities of the Central Contractor Registration, Federal Register, Online Representations and Certification Application, and Excluded Parties List System. To register, go to: <https://www.sam.gov/portal/public/SAM/>. Please allow a minimum of 5 days to complete the SAM registration. SAM registration must be renewed annually.

Significant Partner Contribution: A significant contribution can include financial or technical assistance, monitoring, and administrative services. Contributions can be cash or in-kind, the value of which needs to be quantified in the application, and documented in the year of completion. It is a statute requirement that an eligible partner make a significant contribution to the overall cost of the project. Significant contributions should be treated as committed and encumbered funds by partners.

Technical Assistance (TA): Technical expertise and information to a producer to be able to successfully implement, operate, and maintain the conservation of natural resources on land active in agriculture, forestry, or related uses. Technical assistance does **not** include administrative (to include food, travel, clothing, etc.), research, monitoring (outside of NRCS standards), or outreach and education.

TA dollars may be awarded to the Lead Partner in RCPP. This “Partner Requested TA” shall be limited by funds available, and must be directly associated with expenses clearly related to implementation of the covered program authority, not simply the purpose of the RCPP project. Thus, **“Partner requested TA” is subject to more stringent limitations than partner contributions.**

Partner TA requests will be eligible for potential reimbursement subject to the availability of funds (at the time of agreement negotiation), and NRCS determination that the activity associated with the request meets programmatic requirements. Applicants may use the following question to help determine if an expense is likely to be considered eligible for “Partner TA” (and inclusion in the agreement as a Deliverable, subject to all the normal documentation requirements of federally assisted activities):

Does the activity on the reimbursement request tie back to conservation implementation of practices to producers?

- a. If “Yes”, then consider it as eligible for reimbursement
- b. If “No”, then it is not eligible for reimbursement.

The following activities are NOT designated as costs associated with implementation as defined by NRCS and are NOT eligible expenses:

1. Indirect Costs: Indirect costs, as defined by 2 CFR Part 200, means that those costs incurred for a common or joint purpose benefitting more than one costs objective, and not readily assignable to the cost objectives specifically benefited, without effort disproportionate to the results achieved.
 - a. Administrative Expenses: Expenses that are operational in nature and are part of doing business. TA cannot pay for office space, office supplies, vehicles, computers, or other incidentals.
 - b. Travel
 - c. Food
2. Meetings: Meetings that are educational, outreach or organizational in nature are not considered an eligible reimbursement; however, these costs may be considered as partner contribution. Meetings to meet with an applicant that has applied to review their application, on-site planning, and construction meetings are reimbursable TA expenses.
3. Monitoring: Environmental monitoring is not an eligible expense except as it is covered through an approved NRCS practice standard. Watershed monitoring, bacteria monitoring, in-stream monitoring, non-point source pollutant monitoring, etc. may be considered as a partner contribution.
4. Report Development: This will also include the analysis of any results that may be obtained and written into the report.
5. Outreach and Education not directly tied to project implementation
6. Research
7. Clothing

NRCS Technical Assistance Funds: For NRCS Use and for Partner Use (Partner TA)

- TA for NRCS Use
 - State TA allocations are tied to established (FA/TA) ratios
 - E.g. EQIP ~25% of FA is needed to manage EQIP program and sign-ups and to complete designs, provide on-site installation assistance, and check-out practices
 - As all NRCS FA must be spend in accordance with NRCS policy, NRCS TA ratio should be preserved unless project will demonstrably reduce NRCS workload
- NRCS TA for Partner Use
 - Must be tied to eligible activities as outlined in the APF

- Should reduce NRCS use TA only in proportion to specific NRCS-required activities that partner(s) will complete (e.g., practice design, installation oversight and check-out)
- May increase total TA percentage of program costs consistent with proposal when partner(s) will complete other eligible activities expected to enhance conservation benefits during the life of the RCPP project

Information regarding technical assistance can be found at: <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/cta/>.

APPENDIX C.—SUMMARY OF PROGRAM OBJECTIVES AND TERMS

Below is the most current version of the RCPP Covered Programs

Program	Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP)	Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)	Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)	Healthy Forests Reserve Program (HFRP)	Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Program (PL-566)
Purpose or Goal	Provides funds for the purchase of conservation easements to restore, protect, and enhance wetlands on eligible land; protect the agricultural viability and related conservation values of eligible land by limiting agricultural uses of that land; and protect grazing uses and related conservation values. ACEP has two components, an Agricultural Land Easement component (ACEP-ALE) and a Wetland Reserve Easement component (ACEP-WRE).	Encourages producers to address resource concerns in a comprehensive manner by improving, maintaining, and managing existing conservation activities; and undertaking additional conservation activities.	Provides financial and technical assistance to agricultural producers to help plan and implement conservation practices that address natural resource concerns and for opportunities to improve soil, water, plant, animal, air and related resources on Tribal land, agricultural land, and non-industrial private forestland.	Assists landowners, on a voluntary basis, in restoring, enhancing and protecting forestland resources on private lands to increase the likelihood of recovery of threatened or endangered species, improve biological diversity, and increase carbon sequestration.	Provides technical and financial assistance to entities of State and local governments and Tribes (project sponsors) for planning and installing watershed projects. The Watershed Operations is available nationwide to protect and improve watersheds up to 250,000 acres in size. Currently there are approximately 300 active small watershed projects throughout the country. Eligible purposes include: preventing damage from erosion, floodwater, and sediment; furthering the conservation, development, utilization, and disposal of water; and furthering the conservation and proper utilization of land.

Program	Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP)	Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)	Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)	Healthy Forests Reserve Program (HFRP)	Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Program (PL-566)
Length of Contract	<p>ACEP-ALE: Eligible entities enter into cooperative agreements to place permanent easements and easements of maximum duration allowed by State Law on private lands.</p> <p>ACEP-WRE: Permanent easements, 30-Year easements, 30-Year Contracts with Indian Tribes, and easements of maximum duration allowed by State Law.</p>	5 years with an opportunity to renew for one additional 5-year period.	Up to 10 years.	Permanent easements, 30-year easements, 30-year contracts with Indian Tribes, and 10-year restoration cost-share agreements. Easements are also available for the maximum duration authorized under State law.	Agreements are multi-year, depending upon the nature and scope of the watershed project plan.
Eligible Land	<p>ACEP-ALE: Land eligible for agricultural land easements includes cropland, rangeland, grassland, pastureland, and nonindustrial private forest land which contributes to the economic viability of an offered parcel or serves as a buffer to protect such land from development.</p> <p>ACEP-WRE: Land eligible for wetland reserve easements includes farmed or</p>	<p>All private or Tribal agricultural land and non-industrial private forestland is eligible, unless it is enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), ACEP-WRE, or the Conservation Security Program. Land enrolled in CRP may be eligible if--</p> <p>(i) the CRP contract will expire at the end of the fiscal year in which the land is to be enrolled in CSP; and</p> <p>(ii) CRP payments for land enrolled in CSP cease before the first CSP</p>	<p>Private and Tribal agricultural land, including cropland, grassland, and non-industrial private forestland but does not include land enrolled in CRP or ACEP-WRE.</p> <p>Public lands are eligible in EQIP under limited circumstances where an eligible producer has authority to operate on the public land for the length of the program contract.</p>	<p>All private or Tribal forestland.</p> <p>The following land is not eligible for enrollment in the HFRP:</p> <p>(i) Land owned by the United States, States, or units of local government</p> <p>(ii) Land subject to an easement or deed restriction that already provides for the protection of wildlife habitat or that would interfere with HFRP purposes, as determined by NRCS</p> <p>(iii) Lands that would</p>	<p>Projects are limited by the size of the watershed (not to exceed 250,000 acres) and the size of any single structure (12,500 acre-feet of floodwater detention capacity, and no more than 25,000 acre feet of total capacity.</p> <p>Each project must contain benefits directly related to agriculture, including rural communities, which account for at least 20 percent of the</p>

Program	Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP)	Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)	Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)	Healthy Forests Reserve Program (HFRP)	Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Program (PL-566)
	converted wetland that can be successfully and cost-effectively restored.	payment is made to the applicant.		be eligible for HFRP under Section 511.23 of the HFRP manual.	total benefits of the project.
Eligible Program Applicants	ACEP-ALE: (1) To be eligible to receive ALE funding, an eligible entity must be an Indian Tribe, State government, local government, or a nongovernmental organization which has a farmland or grassland protection program that purchases agricultural land easements for the purpose of protecting agriculture use and related conservation values, including grazing uses and related conservation values, by limiting conversion to nonagricultural uses of the land. In addition, eligible entities Interested in receiving ALE funds must provide NRCS sufficient evidence of: (i) A commitment to long-term conservation of agricultural lands, (ii) A capability to acquire, manage, and	To be eligible to participate in CSP, an applicant must: (1) Be the operator of an agricultural operation in the Farm Service Agency (FSA) farm records management system, unless an exception applies as determined by NRCS; (2) Have effective control of the land unless an exception is made by the Chief in the case of land administered by the BIA, Indian lands, or other instances in which the Chief determines that there is sufficient assurance of control; (3) Be in compliance with the highly erodible land and wetland conservation provisions found at 7 CFR part 12; (4) Be in compliance with Adjusted Gross Income provisions found at 7 CFR part 1400; (5) Supply information, as required by NRCS, to determine eligibility for the program; (6) Comply with applicable	To be eligible to participate in EQIP, an applicant must: (1) Be in compliance with the highly erodible land and wetland conservation provisions found at 7 CFR part 12; (2) Must be a producer as determined by NRCS; (3) Have control of the land for the term of the proposed contract unless an exception is made by the Chief in the case of land administered by the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), Indian lands, or other instances in which the Chief determines that there is sufficient assurance of control; (4) Agree to implement the EQIP plan of operations according to the provisions and conditions established in the EQIP contract, including the EQIP contract appendix; (5) Submit an EQIP plan of operations or plan developed for the purposes of acquiring an air or water quality permit;	To be eligible to enroll an easement in the HFRP, an individual or entity must: (1) Be the landowner of eligible land for which enrollment is sought; and (2) Agree to provide such information to NRCS, as the agency deems necessary or desirable, to assist in its determination of eligibility for program benefits and for other program implementation purposes. <u>Note:</u> Unlike other NRCS programs, the adjusted gross income, highly erodible land, and wetlands conservation provisions are not part of the landowner eligibility requirements for HFRP.	To be eligible to receive PL-566 funds, a qualifying sponsor(s) must have the authority to carry out, operate and maintain works of improvement, including organizations that, individually or collectively, have: (1) The power of eminent domain; (2) The authority to levy taxes or use other adequate funding sources, including state, regional, or local appropriations, to finance their share of the project cost and all operation and maintenance costs; (3) Ability to obtain permits and licenses; (4) Ability to obtain needed land rights; (5) Ability to obtain or provide assurance that landowners or water users have such water rights as may be needed for project;

Program	Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP)	Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)	Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)	Healthy Forests Reserve Program (HFRP)	Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Program (PL-566)
	<p>enforce easements, (iii) Sufficient number of staff dedicated to monitoring and easement stewardship, and (iv) The availability of funds at the time of application sufficient to meet the eligible entity's contribution requirements for each parcel proposed for funding.</p> <p>ACEP-WRE: To be eligible to enroll in WRE, all landowners must:</p> <p>(1) be in compliance with the highly erodible land and wetland conservation provisions in 7 CFR part 12;</p> <p>(2) be in compliance with the Adjusted Gross Income Limitation provisions at 7 CFR part 1400;</p> <p>(3) Be the owner of the eligible land for which enrollment is sought;</p> <p>(4) Provide any documentation required by NRCS as</p>	<p>registration and reporting requirements of the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006 (7) Provide a list of all members of the legal entity or joint operation, as applicable, and associated information.</p>	<p>(6) Supply information, as required by NRCS, to determine eligibility for the program, including but not limited to, information to verify the applicant's status as a limited resource, beginning farmer or rancher, and payment eligibility as established by 7 CFR part 1400;</p> <p>(7) Comply with applicable registration and reporting requirements of the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006; and</p> <p>(8) Provide a list of all members of the legal entity and associated information.</p>		<p>(6) Ability to obtain agreements from landowners to implement conservation plans on not less than 50% of the lands situated in the drainage area above each retention reservoir to be installed;</p> <p>(7) Ability to coordinate or lead public participation;</p> <p>(8) Evidence of commitment of funding, installing, operating and maintaining the project for the design lifespan;</p> <p>(9) Ability to implement needed watershed management features such as permitting, zoning, land use regulation, easements, or upstream watershed protection; and</p> <p>(10) Evidence that any proposed municipal and industrial water supply use will be acceptable in quantity and quality to meet the anticipated needs.</p>

Program	Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP)	Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)	Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)	Healthy Forests Reserve Program (HFRP)	Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Program (PL-566)
	<p>necessary to determine eligibility;</p> <p>(5) Comply with applicable registration and reporting requirements of the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006; and</p> <p>(6) For easement applications, have been the landowner of such land for the 24-month period prior to the time of application unless an exception applies.</p>				<p>Sponsors must commit themselves to use their powers and authority to carry out and maintain the project as planned.</p> <p>To be eligible for program funding under the watershed program authority, the RCPP applicant or their project partners must meet the requirements of a sponsoring local organization.</p>
Program Activities	<p>Under the ACEP-ALE component, NRCS enters into agreements with eligible entities to provide cost-share assistance to the eligible entities to purchase agricultural land easements from eligible landowners. The agricultural land easement, including implementation of the agricultural land easement plan, protects agricultural lands from conversion to non-agricultural uses. Grasslands are protected from conversion to non-</p>	<p>Conservation enhancements treat natural resources and improve conservation performance.</p> <p>Enhancement bundles are available to implement enhancements to addresses resource concerns synergistically.</p> <p>Conservation practices are available to meet additional stewardship thresholds and include land management practices, vegetative practices, and forest management.</p>	<p>EQIP provides financial and technical assistance to producers to obtain conservation planning; implement vegetative practices like conservation buffers, conservation cover, windbreaks, shelterbelts, grass waterways, wildlife habitat development; install structural practices like terraces, waste management structures, anaerobic digesters; and adopt management practices like nutrient management, grazing land management, residue and tillage management, forest stand</p>	<p>HFRP provides financial and technical assistance to restore, protect, and enhance forest resources by providing funds directly to eligible landowners for the purchase of HFRP easements. Additionally, NRCS pays for the implementation of forestry restoration, enhancement, and habitat management practices. The practices adopted under the HFRP restoration plan may be the basis for the landowner to obtain safe harbor assurances under the Endangered Species Act.</p>	<p>Watershed Operations provides financial and technical assistance is provided for activities associated with planning and implementing authorized watershed project plans for the purpose of:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. watershed protection 2. flood mitigation 3. water quality improvements 4. soil erosion reduction 5. rural, municipal and industrial water supply 6. irrigation water management

Program	Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP)	Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)	Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)	Healthy Forests Reserve Program (HFRP)	Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Program (PL-566)
	<p>grassland uses management</p> <p>Under the ACEP-WRE component, NRCS restores, protects, and enhances wetlands by providing funds directly to eligible landowners for the purchase of wetland reserve easements. Additionally, NRCS pays for the implementation of wetland restoration, enhancement, and habitat management practices.</p>		improvement, wildlife habitat management.		<p>7. sediment control</p> <p>8. fish and wildlife enhancement</p> <p>9. hydropower</p>

Program	Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP)	Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)	Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)	Healthy Forests Reserve Program (HFRP)	Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Program (PL-566)
Payments	<p>ACEP-ALE: Up to 50 percent of fair market value (FMV) of the ALE easement or up to 75 percent of the FMV of the ALE for Grasslands of Special Environmental Significance.</p> <p>ACEP-WRE: 100 percent of the easement value and restoration costs for permanent easements. 75% of the easement value and restoration costs for 30-year easements and 30-year contracts (30-year contracts are only available for acreage owned by Indian tribes).</p>	Annual payment based on level of conservation stewardship; supplemental payment for participants that adopt a resource conserving crop rotation. National average cost not to exceed \$18/ac.	<p>Financial assistance payments to participants for the estimated costs incurred for implementing conservation practices. Not to exceed 75% for standard applications and up to 90% for historically underserved participants.</p> <p>Advance payments are available to historically underserved producers for up to 50% of the program payment.</p>	<p>For permanent easements and easements for the maximum duration available under State law, easement compensation provides up to 100 percent of the fair market value of the enrolled land less the fair market value of the land encumbered by the easement. Restoration payments provide up to 100 percent of the restoration costs.</p> <p>For 30-year easements and 30-year contracts, easement (contract) payments provide up to 75 percent of the value that would be paid for a permanent easement.</p> <p>Restoration payments provide up to 75 percent of the restoration costs. For 10-year restoration cost-share agreements – restoration payments provide up to 50 percent of the restoration costs.</p>	Payments provide 50-100 percent of the cost associated with works of improvement for a watershed project.

Program	Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP)	Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)	Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)	Healthy Forests Reserve Program (HFRP)	Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Program (PL-566)
Payment Limits	Not Applicable.	<p>A person or legal entity may not receive, directly or indirectly, payments that, in the aggregate, exceed \$200,000 for all contracts entered into between FY 2014 and FY 2018. The regulation include an annual payment limit of \$40,000 during any fiscal year to a person or legal entity.</p> <p>Contract limitations also apply.</p>	<p>A person or legal entity may not receive, directly or indirectly, payments that, in aggregate, exceed \$450,000 for all contracts entered into between FY2014 and FY 2018.</p> <p>Payments made under the Organic Initiative to a person or legal entity, directly or indirectly, may not exceed in aggregate \$20,000 per fiscal year or \$80,000 during any 6-year period.</p> <p>Tribes and Alaskan Native Corporations are exempt from payment limitations and contract limits.</p> <p>Contract limitations also apply.</p>	Not Applicable.	Not Applicable.
Producer/Landowner Responsibilities	Under ACEP-ALE, the landowner must convey to an eligible entity an agricultural land easement and comply with the terms of the	Enter into a CSP contract that requires the implementation of a conservation stewardship plan. The conservation stewardship plan addresses	Enter into an EQIP contract that requires the implementation of a plan of operations. The plan of operations describes the conservation and	The landowner must convey an HFRP easement to the United States and comply with the terms of the easement. The	Sponsors must have a legal interest in or responsibility for project areas, be capable of obtaining land rights and

Program	Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP)	Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)	Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)	Healthy Forests Reserve Program (HFRP)	Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Program (PL-566)
	<p>easement. Among the terms of the easements is the requirement for the land to be subject to an agricultural land easement plan.</p> <p>Under ACEP-WRE, the landowner must convey a wetland reserve easement to the United States and comply with the terms of the easement. The landowner must also agree to the NRCS implementation of a wetland reserve plan of operations.</p>	<p>resource concerns in a comprehensive manner by installing and adopting additional conservation activities and improving, maintaining, and managing existing activities.</p>	<p>environmental objectives to be achieved. The producer contributes to installation costs and performs operation and maintenance during the lifetime of the installed practices.</p>	<p>landowner must also implement a HFRP restoration plan.</p>	<p>required permits, and carry out operation and maintenance activities. Sponsors must also pay a percent of the cost of the project which varies dependent on project purpose.</p>
Participants Are Subject To	<p>Adjusted Gross Income limitations</p> <p>Registration and reporting requirements of the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006</p> <p>Highly erodible land and wetland conservation compliance</p>	<p>Adjusted Gross Income limitations</p> <p>Registration and reporting requirements of the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006</p> <p>Highly erodible land and wetland conservation compliance</p>	<p>Adjusted Gross Income limitations</p> <p>Registration and reporting requirements of the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006</p> <p>Highly erodible land and wetland conservation compliance</p>	<p>Registration and reporting requirements of the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006</p>	<p>Registration and reporting requirements of the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006</p> <p>RCPP-funded Projects are also subject to--</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highly erodible land and wetland conservation compliance

Program	Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP)	Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)	Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)	Healthy Forests Reserve Program (HFRP)	Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Program (PL-566)
Appeals Process	Title XII	Title XII	Title XII	Non-Title XII	Non-Title XII
Program Web site	http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/easements/acep/	http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/national/programs/farmbill/?cid=stelprdb1242683	http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/national/programs/farmbill/?cid=stelprdb1242633	http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/easements/forests/	http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/national/programs/landscape/wfpo/?cid=nrcs143_008271

APPENDIX E.—DATA ENTRY TOOL ELEMENTS FOR PRE- AND FULL PROPOSALS

Refer to the APF, Appendix E for the required elements for the Pre- and Full proposals. The application consists of the basic following sections (* indicates required data).

The FY18 RCPP Pre-proposal Narrative will include additional questions about previously-submitted applications and similar, funded projects.

Note: During the pre- and full proposal application phases, some auto-generated emails will be sent only to the primary email contact listed. Double check the spelling of the email address submitted to the RCPP database, as this is where emails will be directed. In addition, check your email settings to help ensure the RCPP Team’s messages reach you.

Applicants can access the FY 2017 Data Entry Tool on the RCPP web page under “How to Apply”: <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/farmbill/rcpp/>.